

October 13, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PSC TO RECOMMEND LIMITED REGULATION OF WIRELESS CARRIERS

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission will recommend limited state regulation of wireless telephone carriers to the Nebraska Legislature at a Thursday meeting of the Unicameral's Transportation and Telecommunications Committee.

The Commission approved the recommendation at its Wednesday meeting in Lincoln.

The Legislature will be asked to give the Commission authority to resolve disputes between consumers and wireless carriers on billing and service agreement issues. The legislative proposal would allow for consumers and wireless companies to ask the Commission to step in to resolve such disputes and, establishes a fining authority for the Commission. The recommended legislation would limit state regulation to the terms and conditions of wireless services.

The Commission's recommendation was made in response to Legislative Resolutions 264 and 309, which directed the Commission to give input on wireless regulation to the Legislature. The Commission conducted eight meetings in Fremont, Grand Island, Lincoln, McCook, Norfolk, North Platte, Omaha, and Scottsbluff in the months of August and September, to give the public an opportunity to comment. In addition, written comments from the public and the wireless telephone industry also were received and considered.

The Commission said in its approval of the wireless recommendation that complaints received from consumers now make up one-third of all complaints received from both wireless and wireline customers.

"The Commission considers this significant in light of the fact that it lacks any statutory authority to receive these complaints," the Commission noted on Wednesday. "In addition, consumers are not notified that they may contact the Commission regarding complaints." Out of 134 wireless complaints logged by the Commission from July 1 to September 22 this year, 68 regarded billing and 58 pertained to service.

Of the 35 states responding to a survey by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), 14 indicated that they have some level of regulation over wireless

telephone service. In its findings leading to Wednesday's recommendation, the Commission said, "The Commission has a long history of resolving disputes with carriers in a cooperative manner and does not seek to abandon that practice."

Second District Commissioner Anne Boyle of Omaha, is scheduled to appear on behalf of the Commission before the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee.

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